

Questions about Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Funding Restrictions

Beginning **August 1, 2016**, Georgia will institute a statewide funding restriction for the CAPS program. On that date only applicants who meet eligibility requirements AND who are a member of a priority group as defined in CAPS policy will be approved to receive child care assistance. CAPS policy defines priority groups as people who demonstrate the greatest need for child care assistance.

A list of priority groups and the eligibility requirements can be viewed at www.CAPS.decal.ga.gov.

What is CAPS?

Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program helps families access and afford quality child care by providing subsidies through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). The program, administered in Georgia by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), currently provides assistance to approximately 55,000 children each week with payments issued directly to the child care provider.

Why are funding restrictions needed?

Georgia is instituting the funding restriction to ensure that the state is following federal guidelines mandated by the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). As part of the changes resulting from reauthorization, the CAPS program will raise the reimbursement rates for child care providers caring for children through CAPS. To maintain the state's prescribed CAPS funding without terminating child care assistance to families currently participating in the program, it is necessary to prioritize new families enrolling in CAPS based on specific needs.

What is "funding based on priority groups?"

Previously, funding for the CAPS program was based solely on prescribed eligibility requirements. Because there is only a certain amount of money allocated for subsidized child care, the state must sometimes require additional criteria on which to base funding. "Funding based on priority groups" refers to the additional criteria the state currently uses to determine CAPS funding.

The goal is to provide child care assistance to families who have the greatest need. Consequently, the state has identified the groups that have the greatest need and has **prioritized** funding based on those groups. A detailed list of priority groups and the eligibility requirements can be viewed online at www.CAPS.decal.ga.gov. Beginning August 1, 2016, families applying for CAPS funding must meet the appropriate eligibility requirements and be a member of a priority group.

Priority groups include: *TANF applicants and recipients, children in DFCS custody or in Child Protective Services, minor parents in school, grandparents raising grandchildren, children with special needs, children in Georgia's Pre-K Program requiring extended care, or victims of a natural disaster.*

Who will be impacted by the funding restrictions?

The funding restrictions apply to NEW applicants on or after August 1, 2016. New applicants submitting an online application for CAPS after July 31, 2016 will receive an electronic notice at the time of submission indicating that funding restrictions are in place. New applicants who inquire about or attempt to apply for CAPS in person at their county Division of Family and Children Services office will be notified by DFCS staff about the funding restrictions.

Families currently participating in CAPS will be assessed for eligibility at their redetermination date that occurs after October 1, 2016. Families who are eligible but who are not a member of a priority group at redetermination may be eligible for short term child care assistance to transition off the CAPS program.

If I think I am a member of a priority group, how should I submit an application for child care assistance?

Currently, applications for child care assistance are completed online at www.COMPASS.ga.gov. After viewing the priority groups and the eligibility requirements at www.CAPS.decal.ga.gov, if you think you are eligible for CAPS, complete an online application.

How are applicants notified about the CAPS funding restrictions?

Applicants are notified about the CAPS funding restrictions electronically through Georgia COMPASS at <https://compass.ga.gov/selfservice/> or in person at their local county DFCS office.

Who can I contact for more information?

Constituents with questions/concerns about the funding restrictions should visit www.CAPS.decal.ga.gov and read the Frequently Asked Questions or call 404-657-3434.